

BROOKLINE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2023

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

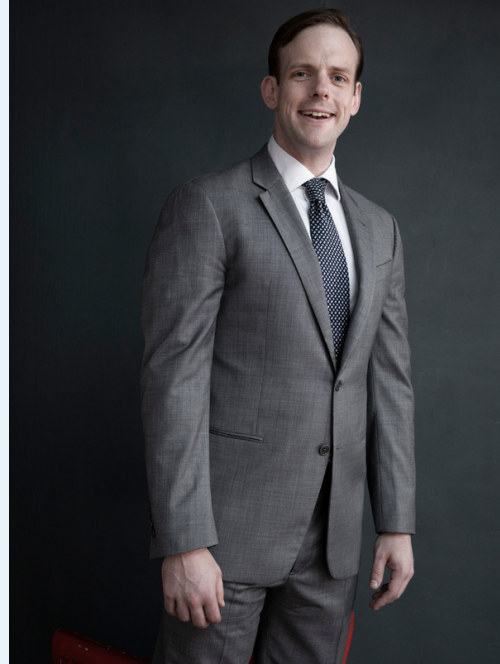
Dear Brookline,

For our shortest month, February sure has a lot going on! Rather than attempt a grand unified theory of everything, I thought I'd kick this edition of the newsletter off with three short thoughts.

ONE: How cruel that at the outset of National African-American History Month we're confronted with the horrific murder of Tyre Nichols, a young Black man, at the hands of the police in Memphis. How cruel that we continue to see these lurid images of Black victims of posse violence spread through our mass media, a continuation in a long exploitative line back to the postcards of lynchings.

How sickening that we are only now as a nation even tentatively acknowledging the entrenched mentalities that have led to the unchecked rise of entities like [the racist gangs rampant in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department](#). How disheartening that, at the national level, the question of the value of Black lives has become politicized by hatemongering grifters desperate to turn resentment into ratings.

The powerful [statement of our Acting Police Chief, Jennifer Paster](#), about Mr. Nichols's murder reflects our community's commitment to a different path, of engagement rather than retrenchment, of introspection and a continued commitment to public safety for everyone, especially those who justifiably view the very term with suspicion. While Brookline is far from perfect, our acknowledgment of our shortcomings and commitment to true equity (not just saying the right things and moving on) will make us stronger and safer. I know in the coming months that our Police Department, together with the Health Department and community stakeholders, will continue to do the hard work of reevaluating what "public safety" means, and how best to provide it. I hope you'll stay involved in that conversation.



TWO: For some months, the Select Board has been discussing the possibility of putting an operating override on your ballots this May. For those unaware, an operating override is a permanent property tax increase that voters must agree to. Apart from so-called “new growth,” municipalities in Massachusetts can’t raise property taxes on their own by more than 2.5% a year. Brookline last passed an operating override in 2018, largely focused on the schools’ needs. This time around, if we’re to go forward, I want the Town’s needs to be equally prioritized.

Granted, when facing an operating deficit and uncertain state aid from a new gubernatorial administration, it can be easy to try and think of the exercise as plugging a hole rather than re-siding a ship. But in my conversations with many residents about what they would want to see in an override package, the consensus was clear: a visionary plan that has impact. People would be willing to pay a little more if they were confident the money was going to high-value uses, was only being asked for after the exhaustion of other sources, and was only as much as necessary to effect long-term transformational changes in services that people want.

To that end, I’m hoping to publicly present the contours of a proposed override to the Select Board and broader community on February 14th. I hope you can find some time around your Valentine’s Day plans to tune in, though I would understand if you waited for BIG to post the recording the next day!

THREE: The last meeting of our former Select Board Chair, Heather Hamilton, on January 31st, was definitely a way for her to go out with a bang. We’re grateful for all her work and support of staff’s needs over her years as a public servant, and wish her the best in all her future endeavors. One of the lengthiest items discussed that night was a request to hire a consultant to begin the work of evaluating how to potentially re-zone Harvard Street, effectively from the Boston border line to Brookline Village, in order to comply with the requirements of a relatively new law, the MBTA Communities Act. That law requires that communities with MBTA stations zone a certain amount of space for multi-family housing to be built “as of right.”

That phrase, “as of right,” conjures up a lot of scary connotations, especially along a busy corridor like Harvard Street. Some people may have visions of ugly glass towers or chintzy stone-clad boxes that go right up to the street line. Others may worry that the commercial development along the corridor that’s just now trying to come back from COVID might get stunted if we can’t mandate that developers build storefronts in ground-floor spaces. Fortunately, rather than capitulating to unchecked growth or proposing we break the law, our Planning Department, after multiple meetings with boards, commissions, and members of the community, has come up with an elegant solution: something called “form-based zoning,” or “FBZ” for short.

So often, when we think of zoning, we think about what it prohibits: no apartments, no labs, no industrial space, etc. FBZ is an exercise in describing what the neighborhood allows. For Harvard Street, we think that it starts with four-story buildings that look like what's there now and incentivizes commercial activity at ground level. But how we write out a very technical code to accomplish those aims and all the others that the community will share with us is going to take an intensive effort on all our parts from now until late summer, and we will need your help to do it right.

I know the potential for any zoning changes, let alone those being made in the face of a controversial law, triggers a lot of strong feelings. In other communities like Pepperell and Salem, efforts fell into bitter recrimination. People pointed fingers, labeling their opponents as "anti-growth reactionaries" or "build-here/build-now zealots" no matter how nuanced their positions actually were, and as a result very little got done. I don't want that for Brookline. We have a unique opportunity to do this the right way, inviting people of all levels of enthusiasm or skepticism into the process that develops a proposed FBZ that lets Harvard Street grow in a sustainable and smart manner in a way that can inform our broader comprehensive planning efforts. I will be frank but fair in addressing misinformation on any side of the debate, but constantly ask everyone to stay at the table.

To that end, if you feel "called out" or frustrated by this process as it moves along, I strongly encourage you to reach out to me. I will be happy to call you back in, getting you answers to any questions you may have and addressing your concerns. Let's respect our neighbors' feelings on the subject, offer the information they need to make informed decisions on it, and assume good faith.

Thanks as always for reading. Wishing you and yours all the best in this short, cold month. As always, stay in touch.

Regards,
Chas

Current listening: Television – "[1880 or so](#)" (Live on Jools Holland, 1992)

LUNAR NEW YEAR AT THE LIBRARY



All three branches of the Brookline Public Library celebrated the Lunar New Year holiday in January.

On the afternoon of Sunday, January 22, the Coolidge Corner branch welcomed an average of 356 visitors *per hour* through the front doors to enjoy delicious snacks, one-on-one calligraphy demonstrations, and of course, amazing performances.

In addition to a show stopping performance from the Gund Kwok Lion Dance Troupe, for the first time ever, two local youth groups from the Westwood Chinese School and the Wang YMCA of Chinatown were invited to perform traditional dances.



Folk Tunes and Story Songs with The New Grownups

Thursday, February 23, 2023 | 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM
Brookline Village Branch | Hunneman Hall
361 Washington Street, Brookline, MA 02445

"Folks Tunes and Story Songs" is a musical journey through roots music and folk stories for children, from energetic singalongs like "The Rattlin' Bog" and "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad" to Pete Seeger's "Abiyoyo". With banjo, guitar, mandolin, and violin all making an appearance, the program will also introduce young listeners to new instruments and musical traditions!



Identity Theft & Fraud Prevention

Tuesday, February 7, 2023 | 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Brookline Village Branch | Hunneman Hall
361 Washington Street, Brookline, MA 02445

Scammers are targeting everyone! Do you know how to keep your identity safe? Join the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation at the Brookline Village Library to be provided with essential information to stay steps ahead of fraudsters and to inform you about the latest scams they are seeing.

DOG LICENSE RENEWAL IS OPEN

The dog licensing renewal period is open in the Town Clerk's Office! Licensing your dog is an important public safety requirement. All owners or keepers of a dog four months or older are required by state law to license it annually. Dogs must be licensed by the end of March to avoid late fees or fines.

A priority in the Town Clerk's Office is to reduce waste and be more sustainable. In order to meet our goals of sustainability and accessibility, we are moving many of our services, including our dog license application, online. You can submit your dog license application online now! Clover, pictured right, is a member of the Green Dog Program.



Dogs that are six months or older can participate in the Green Dog Program. The Green Dog Program is an innovative approach to meeting our dogs' and dog owners' desire to have time off-leash, while sharing the spaces with other park users in our urban community. Brookline has 14 off-leash areas scattered across the town, with specific off-leash hours established by the Park and Recreation Commission. You can register for the Green Dog Program when you renew your dog license!

Information on dog licensing is available online at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/303/Dog-Licenses>. For questions about dog licensing, you can contact the Town Clerk's Office at 617-730-2010, or townclerk@brooklinema.gov

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Throughout 2022, Brookline High School collected almost 115,000 lbs of compost! Brookline's Department of Public Works (DPW) is looking for community volunteers to help continue this important work and help students and staff sort their waste during lunch. Monitor duties include: educating students & staff on proper separation methods, sorting out any contamination from compost and recycling, and gathering uneaten foods for donation to the Brookline Food Pantry.

30-minute shifts are available every weekday (Mon. through Fri.) between 11:30 AM and 1 PM. No previous experience with composting or waste sorting necessary!

To learn more and sign up, visit www.brooklinema.gov/SchoolComposting. If you have any questions, please contact the Town of Brookline's DPW at ZeroWaste@brooklinema.gov.



SWAC Members: John Dempsey and Deane Coady

COA SHARES TRIPPS SUCCESS

After receiving a grant from the Mass Department of Transportation in June 2021, The TRIPPS Program (Transportation, Resources, Information, and Planning & Partnerships for Seniors) of the Brookline Council on Aging produced a series of three instructional videos (with an introduction by our own resident governor, Mike Dukakis!) on using technology to access transportation. In partnership with the Brookline Interactive Group these videos show how to use ride hail (Uber/Lyft) apps, Transit (the public transit app), and the Google Maps app.



All materials developed plus supporting written guides can be found here:
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/2372/Transportation-Resources-Guides>.

The TRIPPS Program also oversees the COA subsidized transportation programs including free medical transportation and low cost rides on Lyft and GoGo. For more information, visit: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1502/Transportation-Services> or contact Maria Foster at (617)730-2644 or mfoster@brooklinema.gov.

THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT WARNS OF ANOTHER KIND OF TRIP...

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among older adults in the U.S., and result in more than three million injuries treated in emergency departments annually. Many of these falls are preventable. The Brookline Health Department has been collaborating with local partners to develop an Older Adult Fall Prevention Program to assess fall risk in adults ages 65+ living in Brookline. Residents aged 65 and older are encouraged to participate in a voluntary survey during the month of February to help inform the Health Department's program planning and interventions related to fall prevention and safety.

The survey can be completed here using this link: <https://forms.gle/gytqjBBtDinqiwSx8>. It will also be made available on paper format at the Brookline Public Libraries, the Senior Center, and at multiple faith-based organizations. We ask that each participant only complete the survey one time. Your information will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email healthsurvey@brooklinema.gov or call (617) 730-2324

THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC ART?

THE COMMISSION WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

The Brookline Commission for the Arts (BCA) announces a new survey opportunity for the community to help identify grant funding priorities and communications preferences about local cultural events held throughout the year. Please take our brief survey here (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BHTBB7F>) by March 1, 2023.

The BCA is a local cultural council recognized by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), the state agency charged with promoting the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences. As authorized by the MCC, the BCA awards grants to individuals, groups, and organizations through an annual statewide application process. The MCC requires local cultural councils to conduct periodical community surveys in order to incorporate views of the public when formulating priorities for grant awards. The BCA also develops and hosts a variety of independent, town-driven arts initiatives annually.

As communication methods for town-wide news have changed over the last five years, the BCA seeks public input to improve event marketing and outreach among all members of the community who are interested in supporting the arts in Brookline. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. Please contact brooklineartscommunications@gmail.com with any questions.

**BROOKLINE
COMMISSION**
for the arts

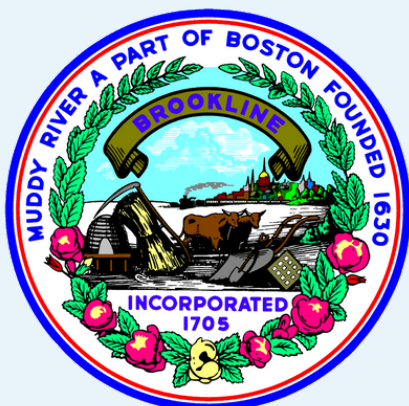
Town of Brookline Work Anniversaries - February 2023

We celebrate the work anniversaries of our employees who joined the Town of Brookline in the month of February over the years. As you can see by the department listing, they are providing a diverse array of services to the Town's employees, residents, businesses, and visitors. Thank you for your service!

Name	Department
Debra Mann	Treasurer
Michael Murphy	Police
Elizabeth Williams	Police Dispatch
Richard Allen	Police
Morgan Laing-Buckland	Purchasing
Amy Hall	Police
Zeray Assefa	IT
John Hogan	Buildings
Sean Guilfooy	Fire
Kevin Mahoney	Fire
Matthew Coleman	Fire
Joseph Mandra	Fire
Brendan Sullivan	Fire
Sean Fields	Fire
Richard Radford	Fire

Name	Department
Stephen O'Connor	Fire
Debra Doyle	DPW - Parks
Richard Stewart	DPW - Highway
Ryan Mello	DPW - Highway
Jamie Jensen	Council On Aging
Maria Morelli	Planning and Development
Abbey Stephens	Library
Walter Francis	Fire
Dorothy Carey	DPW - Parks
Gregory Bernard	DPW - Parks
Lola Ogunkoya	Treasurer
Micah Barshay	Recreation
Tina McCarthy	Planning & Development
Gregory Paulk	DPW - Parks
Danielle Butters	Police Dispatch
Alexandra Vecchio	DPW - Admin
Luis Colon	DPW - Highway

Name	Department
Sigalle Reiss	Health
Danielle Savin	Library
Bruce Phok	Fire
Grainne Maunsell	Fire
Declan Ward	Fire
Christopher Marshall	Fire
Tyler Lerardi	Fire
John Bianchi	Fire
William Spinale	Fire
Tyler Chu	Fire
Paul Buckley	Fire
Ethan Hendrickson-Smith	Fire
Donnell Dias-Gaylor	Town Clerk



*Thank
you!*